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Good Governance Matters:
Optimizing U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan to Advance Good Governance

by

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Captain, U.S. Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense. 34

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ABSTRACT

Success in overcoming the unique challenges of nation building in Afghanistan--the Taliban, narco-trafficking, corruption, tribalism, thirty years of civil strife and an associated "brain drain" require proper organization and resourcing of the U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). This paper traces the origins of the U.S. Afghanistan PRT Model from its inception in 2002 to today. The paper will take a critical look at all the three lines of PRT operation--security, governance and economic development--to determine the effectiveness of the American PRT model in the current Afghan operating environment. Proper balance and focus of effort of the PRT lines of operation will contribute greatly in massing the effects of the PRT in pursuit of a lasting peace and stabilization in Afghanistan. While not a primary PRT line of operation, this paper will examine the role of information operations in connecting the Afghan government to the Afghan people. Besides analyzing empirical data, this paper includes anecdotal data from current and former PRT members. This paper draws conclusions and recommendations from this analysis as well as historical lessons from past counter-insurgencies, demonstrated strengths from other current Coalition PRT Models, and the author's personal experience commanding a PRT in Afghanistan. As a result of this research recommended changes in command structure, funding, civilian manning, tour lengths, and Information Operations are presented in order to fully exploit the condition anticipated by the ongoing surge in Afghanistan. This paper shows that for the Afghans still suffering under the tyranny of terror, a coherent counter-insurgency strategy that

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Introduction

The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea.

--Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*

Conventional counter-insurgency wisdom argues that in an insurgency, the people are the center of gravity or, at the very least, the objective in a counter-insurgency.¹ If one can remove popular support for the insurgency then, it will wilt and die on the vine. Seven years into the Global War on Terrorism, the United States military is trying to separate “the fish from the sea” by expanding its role beyond traditional battlefield dominance, into stabilization and reconstruction. This focus on winning the “hearts and minds” now dominates the strategic thinking, operational planning, and tactical activity associated with fighting the Global War on Terrorism. Robert Taber notes in *War of the Flea*, “The population is the key to the entire struggle. It is his camouflage, his quartermaster, his recruiting office, his communications network, and his efficient, all-seeing intelligence service. Without the consent and active aid of the people, the guerrilla would be merely a bandit, and could not long survive.”² A critical lesson from the American involvement in Vietnam was the improper U.S. characterization of the war. The U.S. initially fought a “soldier’s war,” where the U.S. military naively focused on a clearly distinguishable military versus military conflict paying very little attention to the role of the population. Conversely, the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and Viet Cong were fighting a revolutionary war or a “people’s war” where the line between the combatants and the non-combatants was blurred and the population played a significant

¹ David Galula, *Counter-insurgency Warfare Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 4.

² Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington DC: Brassey's INC, 2002), 11-12.

role on the battlefield. Indeed, some would consider the population as “the battlefield”. In Afghanistan, the U.S is fighting a people’s war and how the *whole of government* apportions and balances resources will be critical in the pursuit of victory.

In Afghanistan, this non-traditional mission requires a significant shift in the military mindset and a new, unprecedented level of U.S. Government inter-agency cooperation. Instead of the traditional military approach designed to kill, capture, or destroy an enemy, the *whole of government* must work together to separate an insurgency from its resources and let it die rather than kill every insurgent. While much boardroom discussion has occurred in Washington about leveraging the capacity of the *whole of government* to separate the “fish from the sea,” at the tactical level in Afghanistan success is slow in coming. In fact, in practice the heavily military construct of the U.S. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan is the antithesis of the artfully designed *whole of government* policy articulated in Washington and codified in National Security Policy Directive-44 (NSPD-44). This dichotomy has exposed a cultural conflict within the U.S. Government between what we *say* and what we *do* in the exercise of national power.

To close this gap and more adroitly maximize the *whole of government* potential, the U.S. must translate boardroom talk into battlefield reality. NSPD-44 gives the U.S. Department the State the lead in integrating the *whole of government* approach at the strategic level. Leadership at the strategic level should translate down to the operational and tactical level. Unfortunately, this migration has yet to occur. According to David Galula, the French counter-insurgency theorist, “A revolutionary war is 20 percent

military and 80 percent political.”³ While recognizing that all the elements of national power have a role in successful counter-insurgency campaigns, political objectives must retain primacy. In order to win the cultural war in Afghanistan and end popular support for the insurgency, the U.S. must first end the cultural struggle within our own government, end our over reliance on military manpower and military solutions to what are at their root political problems, and truly resource and provide a more balanced *whole of government* solution in Afghanistan.

An examination of history, classical counter-insurgency theory, and other current International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF)⁴ PRT Models provide potential considerations for redesigning the U.S.PRT Model. While in search of a more *whole of government* solution, one cannot blindly transfer models of apparent success from one theater of war to another or from one historical era to another or even from one Afghan province to another. Just as Malaya was different from Vietnam, so to is Afghanistan different from Iraq, and Helmand Province different from Khost. In fact, about the only common characteristic across Afghanistan is the wildly held distrust the various tribes have for foreigners and centralized authority. Carbon copy, cut and paste solutions brief well, but almost never translate into success on the battlefield. Still, trends and patterns exist and the U.S. would be foolish not to examine and adopt what works, ever mindful to adjust potential solutions to their new surroundings.

Following the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, the U.S.-led coalition continued to undertake traditional kinetic military operations throughout the country to kill or capture

³ Galula, 63.

⁴ International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is a NATO-led security and development mission in Afghanistan established by the United Nations Security Council on 20 December 2001 as envisaged by the Bonn Agreement.

terrorist elements such as al Qaeda. Subsequent to ousting the Taliban regime, under the auspices of the United Nations in Bonn, Germany in December 2001, the international community laid the foundation for a new legitimate Afghan government. The resulting Bonn Agreement authorized the deployment of a UN-mandated North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led multi-national force, called the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF was initially comprised of 2,500 troops which were stationed in Kabul with a mandate to extend law and order, provide protection to political leaders, prevent violence, distribute supplies, and contribute to nation-building. The Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and ISAF came together to form a three-way partnership to coordinate the nation building process.⁵ ISAF is not a UN force but “a coalition of the willing” acting under numerous UN Security Council Resolutions, all of which relate to the establishment and mandate of ISAF.

The Bonn Agreement set in motion the nation-building mission in Afghanistan that is underway currently and started the gradually increasing non-kinetic civil-military operations that have become a keystone in today’s ISAF strategy in Afghanistan. To plan and execute nation building at the tactical level, the U.S. created the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept. This concept spread quickly to other ISAF nations. NATO and other Coalition Nations reaffirmed their commitment to Afghanistan during the 2006 London Conference that culminated with the Afghan Compact. Signatories of the Afghan Compact resolved to overcome the legacy of conflict in Afghanistan by

⁵ Center for Humanitarian Cooperation (CHC), “The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan and Its Role in Reconstruction,” 31 May 2003, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/OCHA-64BGJ7?OpenDocument> (accessed December 3, 2008).

setting conditions for sustainable economic growth and development; strengthening state institutions and civil society; removing remaining terrorist threats; meeting the challenge of counter-narcotics; rebuilding capacity and infrastructure; reducing poverty; and meeting basic human needs.⁶

The Bonn Agreement and the London Conference provide the international community with legitimacy and reaffirms its commitment to the nation-building mission in Afghanistan. The foundation established by the Bonn Agreement coupled with over three years of experience in Afghanistan, and some foreshadowing of the Afghan Compact, resulted in the ISAF Executive Steering Committee defining the PRT Mission in January 2005. The mission of the PRT is to “assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to extend its authority into the provinces, to enable security sector reform, [and] enable reconstruction efforts.”⁷ The PRTs strive to accomplish their mission by balancing properly military and non-military means.

A focus on winning the “hearts and minds” now dominates the strategic thinking, operational planning, and tactical activity associated with fighting the Afghan War. As manifested by US PRTs in Afghanistan, this non-traditional mission requires a significant shift away from an almost exclusively military effort to a more *whole of government* approach. It must be recognized that the PRTs are just one specialized tool in the counter-insurgency toolbox being carried by the United States, NATO, and its’ Coalition partners in meeting the objectives spelled out within the Afghan Compact. As the U.S.

⁶ London Conference, *Afghan Compact* (1 February 2006), http://nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/afghanistan_compact.pdf (accessed December 3, 2008)

⁷ Taken from the Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRT’s in Afghanistan, which were adopted by the Executive Steering Committee on 27 January 2005.

shifts attention from Iraq to Afghanistan and as President Obama calls for greater State Department assistance for Afghanistan, the U.S. would do well to recalibrate and refocus the PRTs to mass their effects properly to take advantage of increased access and security expected to come with the introduction of additional forces.

I. Operating Environment

The country is too large, the territory too forbidding, the ethnic composition too varied, the population too heavily armed. No foreign conqueror has ever succeeded in occupying Afghanistan. Even attempts to establish centralized Afghan control have rarely succeeded and then not for long. Afghans seem to define their country in terms of a common dedication to independence but not to unitary or centralized self-government.

--Henry Kissinger, 26 February 2009

As cited in FM 7-98, the U.S. Army's Field Manual for Operations in Low Intensity Conflict, "no two insurgencies are the same" and no easy, cookbook solution exists.⁸ As the U.S. focus shifts from Iraq to Afghanistan, the viewing lens requires adjustment to account for the vastly different operating environments between the theaters. As the Commander of U.S. Central Command and architect of the successful counter-insurgency strategy in Iraq, General Petraeus, recently reminded Americans, "Afghanistan is the graveyard of empires."⁹ As great as the challenges and objectives were in Iraq, once they were recognized and understood, the proper adjustments in strategy, operations and tactics could occur. Compared to Afghanistan, stabilization and nation building in Iraq resembles a game of Checkers, where the direction across the board is clear with well-defined objectives. In Afghanistan, however, the playing board is blurred, mired in a nexus of paradoxes, and best described as a three dimensional game of Chess—where forward progress may require lateral or even backward movement. For example, in Afghanistan PRT Commanders face the dilemma of having to cavort with warlords in order to advance stabilization and security efforts at the expense of losing

⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army. *U.S. Army's Field Manual for Operations in Low Intensity Conflict, FM-7-98*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters Dept of the Army 1992), 18.

⁹ Craig Whitlock, "National Security Team Delivers Grim Appraisal of Afghanistan War," *Washington Post*, 9 February 2009.

ground in establishing good, legitimate governance. Conversely, the advancement of the governance line of operation may require the firing of an entire corrupt district police force with the tacit understanding that doing so will retard progress in establishing security.¹⁰ The art of synchronizing all three lines of operation in the dynamic Afghan operating environment require commanders, diplomats and development advisers to exercise a great deal of what Clausewitz called “coup d’oeil” to ensure moves across the three dimensional chessboard do not result in America becoming just another headstone in the Afghan graveyard.

Comprised of over 400 fiercely independent tribal and ethnic groups strewn across some of the most rugged terrain in the world, Afghanistan has never had a sense of national identity. Tribal identity defines most Afghans, especially the Pashtuns throughout Eastern and Southern Afghanistan. The phrase, “all politics are local,” even holds true in Afghanistan with the tribe being the center of political universe for the average Pashtun. An old Pashtun adage holds, “I have been a Pashtun for 6,000 years, a Moslem for 1,300 years and an Afghan for 100 years.” Unlike Iraq with its’ oil, Afghanistan possesses neither national wealth nor any natural resources with which to generate potential wealth. As lucrative as it appears, Afghanistan’s main export of heroin, is not a viable basis for acceptable and self-sustaining economic growth. While comparable in population, Afghan human capital is severely underdeveloped relative to Iraq. Literacy rates in Afghanistan barely top 28% compared to over 70% in Iraq. Life expectancy in Afghanistan is a mere 44 years of age as opposed to almost 70 years in Iraq. Afghanistan lags dramatically in national infrastructure with absolutely no

¹⁰ The author’s personal experience while serving as PRT Commander Farah Province, Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

railroads. Compared to Iraq, Afghanistan has 17% the number of paved roads, 20% of the airports, and less than 2% of the electrical production.¹¹ Outside of the major cities in Afghanistan, one could describe the level of development as almost biblical with most villages have no running water, electricity or sanitation, and people living in adobe mud buildings similar to the structures found in Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Christ. The term *reconstruction* implies rebuilding something that had previously existed. For example, in Iraq, the U.S. is reconstructing the national electric grid and restoring power to the cities. In Afghanistan, the U.S. and its PRTs more often than not are creating and constructing critical infrastructure for the first time.

The challenges facing the PRTs in their attempts to link the population to the government are daunting. Even without an ongoing insurgency, nation building in Afghanistan would be extremely difficult. Afghanistan ranks 210th out of the 229 recognized countries in the world in per capita GDP, only beating out countries such as Somalia, Mozambique, and Eritrea. Other indicators reinforce Afghanistan's lagging status. Afghanistan has a 40% unemployment rate. Fifty-three percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Life expectancy is 44 years. The average age of the Afghan population is only 17.6 years old and the infant mortality rate is 3rd highest in the world.¹² After nearly 30 years of war, the country has experienced a significant "brain drain," which has resulted in vast numbers of its educated middle class and elites leaving for more prosperous and safe opportunities abroad. The Afghan Embassy in Washington, DC, estimates that the Afghan diaspora in the United States tops 300,000

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan", *2008 CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed 23 November 2008)

¹² Central Intelligence Agency, "Iraq", *2008 CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed 23 November 2008)

alone and there is precious little the Afghan government can offer to entice them back.¹³ General David McKiernan, the ISAF Commander, when describing the Afghan operating environment stated, “It’s complex in terms of demographics, of resources, or more specifically the lack of resources, to include what I normally like to refer to as the lack of human capital, the lack of – the availability of people that can provide governance in Afghanistan.”¹⁴ Reconstruction in Iraq is comparable to the Marshall Plan subsequent to World War II, where a foundation of infrastructure once stood and one could leverage indigenous human capital, while the society had a respect for central government authority and rule of law. “Reconstruction” in Afghanistan is similar to modernizing Europe after the Thirty Years Wars, where no infrastructure exists, where severe limitations in indigenous human capital retard societal advancement, and the concept of a centralized government is incomprehensible.

Besides battling the Taliban-led insurgency, PRTs must compete with narco-traffickers, illegally armed militias supporting local warlords, tribal blood feuds, meddling neighboring countries, and the ever-lurking Al Qaeda presence to connect the government to the people and influence popular opinion. General McKiernan described the threat as, “a nexus of insurgency. There’s a very broad range of militant groups that are combined with the criminality, with the narco-trafficking system, with corruption, that form a threat and a challenge to the future of that great country.”¹⁵ When Afghans

¹³ The Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington, DC. “Afghan Diaspora”. The Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington, DC, Webpage. <http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/diasora.html> (accessed 2 May 2009)

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) News Transcript. Gen David McKiernan, DoD News Briefing from the Pentagon, 1 October 2008. <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4297> (accessed 15 January 2009).

¹⁵ Ibid.

across all 34 provinces were polled in Jan 2009, 58% stated the Taliban pose the greatest danger, while 13% believe it is the narco-traffickers, 7% believe the warlords and interestingly, 8% felt the U.S. was the greatest danger.¹⁶ Many of these entities enjoy external support for their causes as well as sanctuary across a porous border shared with six other countries, the most problematic of which is the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) in Pakistan.

In 1893, the Durand Agreement (Sir Mortimer Durand) which established Afghanistan's modern national boundaries between Afghanistan and then British India (including what would eventually become Pakistan), intentionally bifurcated the traditional Pashtun lands in an attempt to limit tribal influence in the region. Sir Mortimer's border tinkering has quite possibly become the single most destabilizing element in the Afghan War, creating a geo-political "free surface effect,"¹⁷ where the free flow of Pashtuns across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border has the potential to destabilize or even capsize both countries.

Roger Trinquier, author of *Modern Warfare, a French View of Counter-insurgency*, writes, "The enemy's freedom of action beyond our frontiers is one of the factors determining the duration of the conflict."¹⁸ Lessons from the Algerian and Huk

¹⁶ Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research in Kabul, BBC, ABC News America and ARD of Germany Afghan Opinion Poll, 12 January 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7872353.stm (accessed 20 February 2009).

¹⁷ Free Surface Effect is one of several mechanisms by which a vessel can become unstable and capsize. It refers to the tendency of liquids-- and of aggregates of small solid objects, like seeds, gravel, or crushed ore which can act as liquids — to move in response to changes in the attitude of a vessel's cargo holds, decks, or liquid tanks in reaction to operator-induced motions. Without a baffle (or a border) to stop the free flow of liquid from one side of the ship to another, the momentum created by the sloshing liquid (water) can cause the craft to become unstable, dip below the waterline, take on additional water, and capsize.

¹⁸ Trinquier, Roger. *Modern Warfare, A French View of Counter-insurgency*. (London: Pall Mall Press 1964), 98.

(Philippine) Insurrections and the Vietnam conflict demonstrates that closing borders or geographically isolating an insurgency is a key strategy for a nation to prevent outside support for the insurgents. The inability to seal the Afghan border will prolong the insurgency, which in the end will challenge the long-term commitment and test the resolve of the United States and Coalition partners. Without isolating the insurgents, “kill, capture, or destroy” tactics will only provide temporary success. Over the last four years, the Taliban has used sanctuary in the FATA to recruit, rebuild, and rearm resulting in the current upswing in violence across the country. This shift has affected both Afghan civilians and the U.S. military. Afghanistan has experienced a 39% increase in civilian deaths (1,445 in 2008) from 2007 to 2008 while the U.S. casualty rate during that same period has tripled from two combat deaths to just over six deaths per every 1000 personnel years.¹⁹

Body counts will not win the war. Ultimately, it will be the ability or inability of the U.S., ISAF, and the PRTs, working with the GIRoA, to transform Afghan institutions to “separate the fish from the sea” that will determine victory or defeat in Afghanistan. Understanding the origin and purpose of PRTs and properly organizing and resourcing them will significantly enhance America’s chance to apply a *whole of government* solution to this very diverse and difficult problem.

¹⁹ Sheila M. Bird, MRC Biostatistics Unit, CAMBRIDGE CB2 0SR, and Clive B. Fairweather CBE, Consultant to Combatstress, EH39 4BE, “Report on Recent Military Fatalities in Afghanistan and Iraq by Cause and Nationality”, 19 January 2009, http://www.mrc-bsu.cam.ac.uk/BSUsite/Publications/PDFs/PERIOD7_military_fatalities_in_Afghanistan_and_Iraq.pdf (accessed 20 February 2009)

II. PRT Overview

A PRT is a civil-military institution that is able to penetrate the most unstable and insecure areas because of its military component and is able to stabilize these areas because of the capabilities brought by its diplomacy, defense, and development components.

--ISAF PRT Handbook 2006

An ISAF patchwork quilt of PRTs stretches across Afghanistan, with no patch identical to any other. The unifying thread that pulls this quilt together is the shared ISAF-defined PRT mission and lines of operation. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are civil-military organizations whose mission it is to (1) assist the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA) to extend its governmental authority to the provinces, (2) enable security sector reform, and (3) enable reconstruction and development efforts.²⁰ The three lines of operation of the PRT mission—governance, security, and economic development--dovetail nicely with the diplomatic, military, and economic elements of national power.

To fully understand the issues and challenges faced by the PRTs in Afghanistan today it is imperative to examine the origins of the PRT concept. The current PRT concept was born out of the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy (OSD-P) Stability Operations Branch in early 2002. The original concept called for a blending of the military's Special Forces operational detachments (ODA) and Civil Affairs detachments, with the U.S. Department of State (DoS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and non-governmental organizations. The primary focus of the original concept was on building capacity of the Afghan National Security

²⁰ Taken from the Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRT's in Afghanistan, which were adopted by the Executive Steering Committee on 27 Jan 05.

Forces (ANSF) along with humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and local governance.²¹

Consistent with OSD's concept, in November 2002, the U.S. military proposed its plan to aid in the stabilization of Afghanistan using Joint Regional Teams (JRT). When Hamid Karzai, President of the Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA), received the original JRT concept brief, he insisted that the term "provincial" be substituted in the title because it reinforced the governance boundaries, vice the term "regions", which potentially correlated to a warlord's informal domain or ethnic boundaries. Additionally, Karzai insisted that the term "reconstruction" be included in the title because he wanted emphasis to be on the services provided to the people vice the focus being too heavily on security, which is what many in the U.S. military wanted. The PRT concept was designed to build upon the existing Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs or "Chicklets"), which were teams of Civil Affairs soldiers paired with one or two roving USAID personnel and the U.S. Special Forces teams that had been working closely with the warlords to restore stability subsequent to the ouster of the Taliban regime. By January 2003, all parties accepted the term Provincial Reconstruction Team and the first PRT formally stood up in Gardez on February 1, 2003.²² Seeing the value of a small economy of force organization capable of bringing various elements of national power together, the international community quickly embraced the PRT concept.

In the *clear-hold-build* phased approach to stabilization, the PRTs play a key role in enabling governance, security sector reform, and economic development to occur in

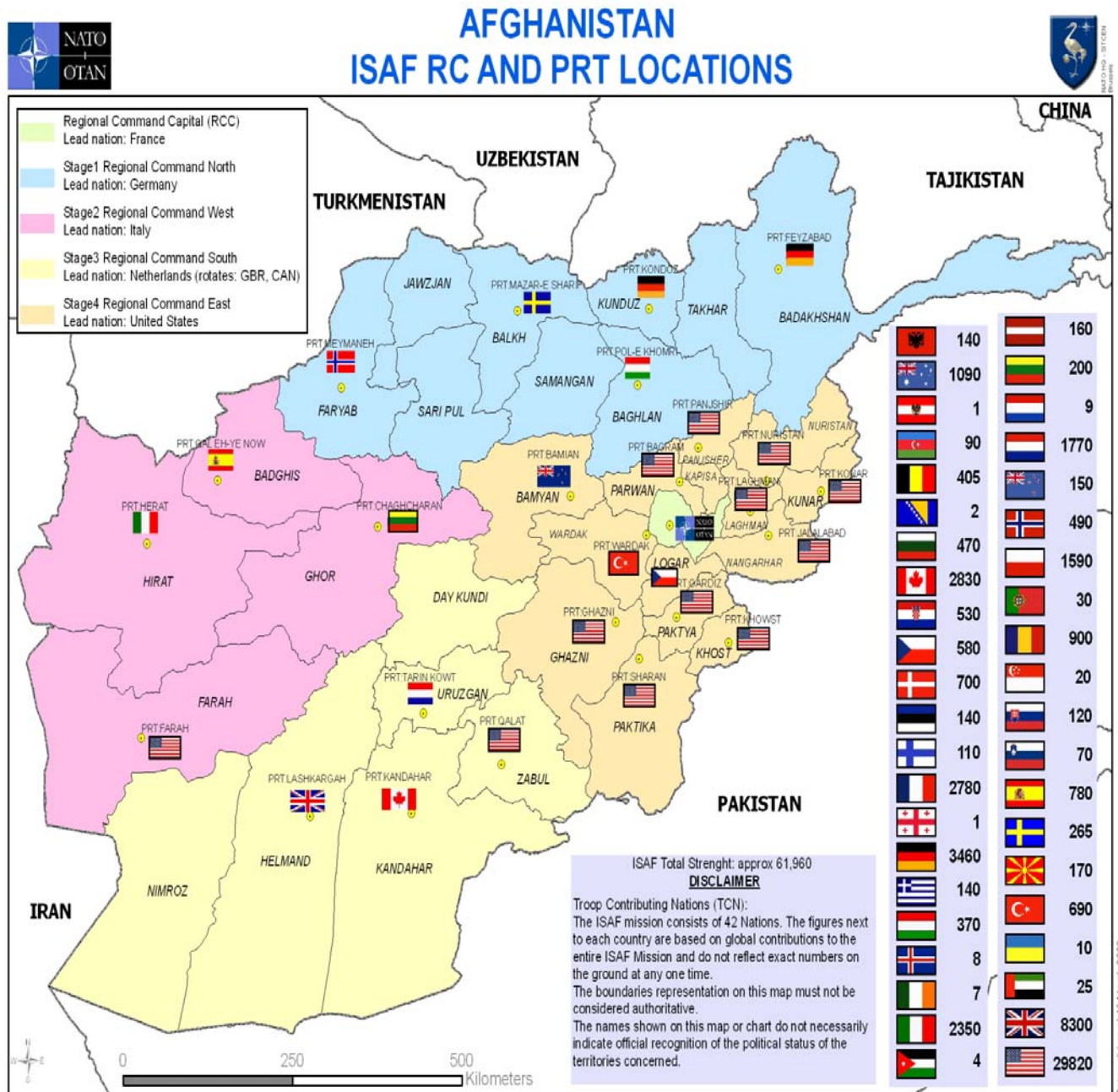
²¹ Interview with Ms Laura K. Cooper, Office of Secretary of Defense for Policy, Director for Strategy Policy Planning Office 18 November 2008.

²² Center for Humanitarian Cooperation (CHC). The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan and its Role in Reconstruction. 31 May 2003, www.reliefweb.int, (accessed 3 Dec 2008)

the semi-permissive environment prevalent in much of Afghanistan. Each nation sponsoring a PRT has developed a separate PRT Model to best leverage their respective elements of national power. The challenge in developing an effective PRT structure is to achieve an optimized blending of civilian and military skill sets to mass PRT effects safely and effectively. There are currently 26 PRTs led by 14 different nations throughout Afghanistan's 34 provinces (Figure 2-1). All PRTs are under the operational control of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), but individual nations, including the United States, determine the size, scope, organization, and employment of their respective PRTs. The PRTs vary widely across Afghanistan in capability, resources, and operating latitude. Accounting for the disparities among the different nation's PRTs, ISAF policies and direction regarding PRTs appeal to the lowest common denominator.

The U.S. operates 12 of the 26 PRTs, with the majority of the U.S. PRTs being located in the eastern part of the country and along the Pakistan border. As of April of 2008, the Department of Defense (DoD) had 1,021 military personnel serving in PRTs, while Department of State (DoS) had 18 personnel, USAID provided 19 and Department of Agriculture (USDA) assigned 12.²³ The general composition of the U.S. PRTs is approximately 88 military personnel and 3 civilians, one each from DOS, USAID, and USDA. The 14 non-U.S. PRTs vary in structure and personnel. The Italian, German, Canadian and British PRTs all boast over 100 personnel. The largest PRT in Afghanistan is the German PRT in Kunduz comprised of 500 personnel. The non-U.S. PRTs also tend to have more civilians than their U.S. counterparts. The Canadian PRT has a group of 20 civilians comprised of aid specialists, diplomats, police and corrections officers that

²³ GAO, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq", GAO-08-905RSU (Washington, D.C.; Sept. 26, 2008) . 9.



Source: ISAF Factsheet, 13 March 2009

Figure 2-1

directly support development and reconstruction activities along with 315 military personnel.²⁴ The UK PRT in Helmand has 30 civilians, divided into different functional cells, which include stability, development, rule of law, and governance. Recognizing the political primacy of the British operations in Helmand, a two star equivalent civilian commands the PRT, serving as the senior British government official in the province and even outranking the British maneuver element commander.²⁵

The international diversity of the PRTs is both a blessing and a curse. While it brings increased international attention and resources to the problem, this diversity also means that PRTs as a whole operate under differing individual national direction and caveats. A British study notes that the lack of common operating protocols and objectives weakens *unity of effort* and “leads to confusion among national and international actors who cannot predict from one PRT to the next what to expect in terms of expertise, level or sustainability of engagement, or focus.”²⁶ Across the ISAF PRT mosaic, operational disparities driven by national caveats create great confusion and frustration with their Afghan partners. For example, Afghans express confusion over the U.S. PRT prohibition on direct involvement in counter-narcotics operations when compared to the UK PRT, which plays a major role in the Afghan Counter-narcotics

²⁴ Interview with Colonel Robert Chamberlain, RCA, former Kandahar PRT Commander. 18 December 2008.

²⁵ Jerry Meyerle, Whitney Raas, Carter Malkasian, and Fred Thompson. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work*. Center for Navy Analysis. (CRM D0019230.A1/SR1 October 2008), 6.

²⁶ Dylan Hendrickson, Michael Bhatia, Mark Knight, and Annabel Taylor, *A Review of DFID Involvement in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan*, Report Commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (London: King’s College, 8 July 2005), 7.

campaign. Another example, which is largely different across the contributing nations, is the role of PRTs in relation to maneuvering to or avoiding enemy contact. The U.S. PRTs have operational latitude or freedom to stand and fight, where most PRTs are restrained by national caveat, compelling them to break contact. As one might imagine it is very frustrating to the Afghans, steeped in their warrior tradition, who do not fully understand the national caveats and operational constraints each of the ISAF nation's forces operate under.²⁷

Varying levels of funding create disparities among the PRTs and complicate relations with the Afghans. The Lithuanian PRT in Ghor Province, which in 2007 only received \$1.5 million in reconstruction funding pales in comparison to the twelve U.S. PRTs which each averaged just over \$9 million during the same period.²⁸ Unfortunately, overly optimistic post-Taliban regime rhetoric led to elevated Afghan expectations that require financial commitments that some sponsoring nations are unwilling or unable to fulfill. In reality, guidance received by the PRTs comes from the capitals of the sponsoring nations or their respective national command elements within Afghanistan. ISAF relies almost entirely on the sponsoring nations for project funding and can only hope to synchronize campaign objectives with the financial resources provided to the PRTs by their respective sponsoring nations.

The inequities in PRT resourcing have created some frustration at the central government level and jealousies among the provincial governors. The governors and

²⁷ The author's personal experience while serving as PRT Commander Farah Province, Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

²⁸ Egdunas Kacius, "The Cultural Awareness Factor in the Activities of the Lithuanian PRT in Afghanistan," *Baltic Defence Security Review* Vol 9 (2007): 68. GAO, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq*, GAO-08-905RSU (Washington, D.C.; September 26, 2008), 11-12.

other provincial leaders do not understand why all provinces are not treated the same. The former Governor of Farah Province, Muhaiddin Baluch Khan, would complain bitterly to the U.S. PRT in the province that he was being unfairly treated, pointing out that the German PRT in Kunduz built many more roads and impressive buildings in Kunduz and asking why the U.S. PRT could not do the same in Farah.²⁹ In Afghanistan, where perception is reality, these inequities create perceptions of favoritism and generate friction between the governors and their respective PRTs.

Notwithstanding the confusing lines of command and disparate funding, no PRT is ideal—all have strengths and weaknesses. The biggest strength with the individual PRT models is the ability to tailor the PRT to meet the specific needs of the province in which it operates. The threat levels and existing capacity are just a few factors considered by sponsoring nations when establishing a PRT. The high threat level and absence of critical infrastructure in ISAF Region East influenced the character and form of the U.S. PRT Model. The U.S. PRTs operating in the East have a small civilian footprint and a robust military component, organized to operate in close concert with the maneuver element task forces in the area. The Italian PRT Model varies greatly from the U.S. models in the East. The Italian PRT is located in Western Afghanistan in Herat (Hirat) Province where the provincial capital never fell victim to the atrocities felt elsewhere in the country during the Soviet occupation or the Taliban regime. As a result, Herat has a reliable power grid, established construction capacity, relative low threat level within the city, a functioning airport, and large numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGO) as well as a significant U.N. presence. Therefore, the Italian PRT

²⁹ The author's personal experience while serving as PRT Commander Farah Province, Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

Model possesses the capability to leverage existing Afghan indigenous capabilities, while integrating and synchronizing development efforts with the large number of international actors in the province.

Given the perceived lack of ISAF control over PRT funding and the effect of national caveats on operational consistency, it is obvious why certain ISAF Headquarter staff elements often refer to the PRTs as “*The Independent Republic of PRTs*.”³⁰

Recognizing the frustrations and difficulties in synchronizing 26 disparate units, all operating under unique limitations, the ISAF patchwork quilt of PRTs is the only viable source of protection and development some areas of Afghanistan will ever receive. Such is the nature of coalition warfare--or in this case nation-building.

³⁰ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan while attending the ISAF Region Command West, Commander's Conference 18 March 2008.

III. The U.S PRT Composition

As boardroom theory clashed with battlefield reality, President Bush and certain members of his cabinet repeatedly touted the PRTs as a key part of the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Iraq.³¹ Many in OSD and around Washington drank the PRT kool-aid and immediately included the PRT buzzword in their daily lexicon. As the author of this paper conducted, a series of office calls in and around Washington prior to departing for Afghanistan to command the PRT in Farah, it became apparent that many of the mid-level staffers inside the Beltway did not clearly understand the size, scope and limitations of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Many in Washington imagined PRTs to be large monolithic unconstrained organizations with virtually unlimited resources. As noted earlier nothing could be farther from the truth. Some in Washington saw the PRTs as conduits to provide them access out in the field to collect data for their pet projects. This type of misperception of the role of PRTs resulted in numerous instances where the PRTs became Christmas trees on which U.S. and international government organizations (IGO) hung an eclectic and odd array of ornamental taskings that significantly detracted from the PRTs primary mission. For example, one of the more unusual and unrealistic taskings received by the PRT in Farah was to count all of the gravestone markers in the province in an obtuse effort to conduct a census. Aside from obvious personnel and vehicle limitations, the province is one and a half times the size of the state of Maryland, with only two paved roads, and a threat level that ranged from high to very high. The Military PRT Commander, applying a military-based common sense approach and the knowledge that

³¹ President George W Bush, State of the Union Address, 23 January 2007.

this requirement had not come from his military chain of command, disregarded the tasking.³² Unfortunately, a great deal of this friction is clearly a result of not understanding the composition, limited capability, and mission of the U.S. PRTs.

To correct misconceptions and to understand fully the true nature of the PRT concept it is imperative to examine the critical assumptions underlying the U.S. PRT concept. The original OSD concept called for one DOS representative, one USAID representative and ideally one U.S. Department of Agriculture representative. Assuming such a small civilian footprint, the original PRT concept relied heavily on the “reach back” capabilities of the different agencies and departments represented as well as their ability to contract niche areas like infrastructure development through World Bank or U.S. Army Corps of Engineer type organizations to provide large scale capacity building projects such as providing power and water. Recognized from the beginning that even a small permanent non-DOD civilian staff would push the capabilities of the parent organizations, OSD-Policy felt the manning required by the non-DOD elements of the PRTs was not unrealistic or unachievable.³³

A prevalent misconception in Washington is that the PRTs is a modern day version of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS).³⁴ While informed by the U.S. CORDS experiences during Vietnam, there is no evidence supporting the perception by some that the PRT Model intends to mirror the CORDS

³² The author’s personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

³³ Interview with Ms Laura K. Cooper, Office of Secretary of Defense for Policy, Director for Strategy Policy Planning Office 18 November 2008.

³⁴ The author’s personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

program model. Certainly many in OSD were cognizant of the lessons of CORDS, however, the influence of CORDS on the development of the PRT concept are implicit vice explicit. Granted, similarities exist conceptually and the two programs exercise common counter-insurgencies tenets, differences in organization, manning levels, funding and operating constraints would make it unwise to compare the two models. The primary difference between the CORDS concept and the PRT concept is the PRT model relies on very few civilians

The three lines of operation of the PRT mission—governance, security, and economic development--should mesh well with the diplomatic, military, and economic elements of national power. However, Department of Defense (DoD) currently is the dominant influence with U.S.-sponsored PRTs, driving the stabilization effort and providing the vast majority of manpower and resources. As a result, the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan have focused on security sector reform to the virtual exclusion of the development of governmental institutions necessary to extend the authority of the IRoA, while doing very little to develop or enable reconstruction of Afghan economic capacity. The organization of the PRT is out of balance and risks creating a cultural rift between DoD, Department of State, and USAID. Without the U.S. expertise in governance and economic development *on the ground* in Afghanistan to round out and inform the military effort in a synchronized manner, the huge amount of Defense Department resources devoted to stabilization and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan will fail to create peaceful, prosperous environment necessary to garner lasting popular support. The PRTs, if properly aligned are in a perfect position to reverse this trend while establishing lasting government institutions that will help in separating the fish from the sea. Without

good governance,³⁵ including the establishment of the Rule of Law, the people of Afghanistan will continue to lack faith and confidence in the Afghan government and return instead to their traditional tribal systems. In worst case, due to perceived governmental abuse, incompetence, and corruption, the populace will turn away from the central government and look to the Taliban for governance, security, and basic economic well-being.

The U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan adopted an approach to extending influence in the countryside that was similar to what U.S. forces used in the Philippines subsequent to the Spanish-American War. The U.S PRTs are small footprint, economy of force units established out in the provinces to influence the population and mentor local civil administrators. Averaging around 88 personnel, the PRT provides massed effects of U.S. diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) elements of power to support their mission of extending the authority of the GIRoA into the provinces. Of the 88 personnel assigned to the U.S. PRTs, the majority are critical enablers-- force protection personnel, combat service support personnel (mechanics, cooks, medics etc) and a headquarters element--not directly engaged with the Afghans. The number of actual PRT personnel engaged in the day-to-day substantive PRT work is typically between 15 and 20.³⁶ The military element engaged directly in the daily PRT fight consists of a military

³⁵ Good governance as described by the United Nations is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf>

³⁶ Statement of Michelle Parker, former USAID Field program Officer in the Jalalabad PRT July 2004 to February 2006 and Development Advisor to COMISAF, Gen Richards, March 2006 to December 2006. Testimony presented before House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation (5 September 2007), 4.

commander, two U.S. Army civil affairs teams (CAT-A & CAT-B), one or two military engineers as well as a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) civilian, an Information Operations Officer, a three man Police Training and Assist Team (PTAT), and medical personnel dual rolled as medical providers to PRT members as well as mentors to Afghan Ministry of Health personnel. As previously mentioned, the non-DoD civilian element of the PRTs is very small, consisting of only three personnel, one each from Department of State, USAID and the Department of Agriculture.³⁷

The PRT, including its' civilian element, is best described as a pick-up team brought together approximately 2 to 3 months prior to deploying to Afghanistan to complete pre-deployment training. PRT manning includes active duty personnel, reservists, to include inactive ready reservists (IRRs), and National Guardsmen. The current DoD policy of not activating reservists for more than a 13 month period limits boots-on-the-ground time in Afghanistan for military members of the PRT to only 9 months. Exacerbating the pick-up nature of the PRT, the civilian PRT element may be on the ground anywhere from 6 months in the case of certain USDA personnel to 12 months for DoS and USAID representatives. This personnel turmoil hinders teambuilding within the PRT, limits the opportunity for some members to understand local conditions, and reduces the overall effectiveness of the PRT. Within hours of the PRT's return to CONUS, the PRT disarms, disbands and disperses across the globe with personnel returning to their original parent commands or back to their civilian lives. Turnover between PRTs is limited and no mechanism to debrief personnel or collect lessons learned exists. With their return home, the PRT personnel take with them 9 months of

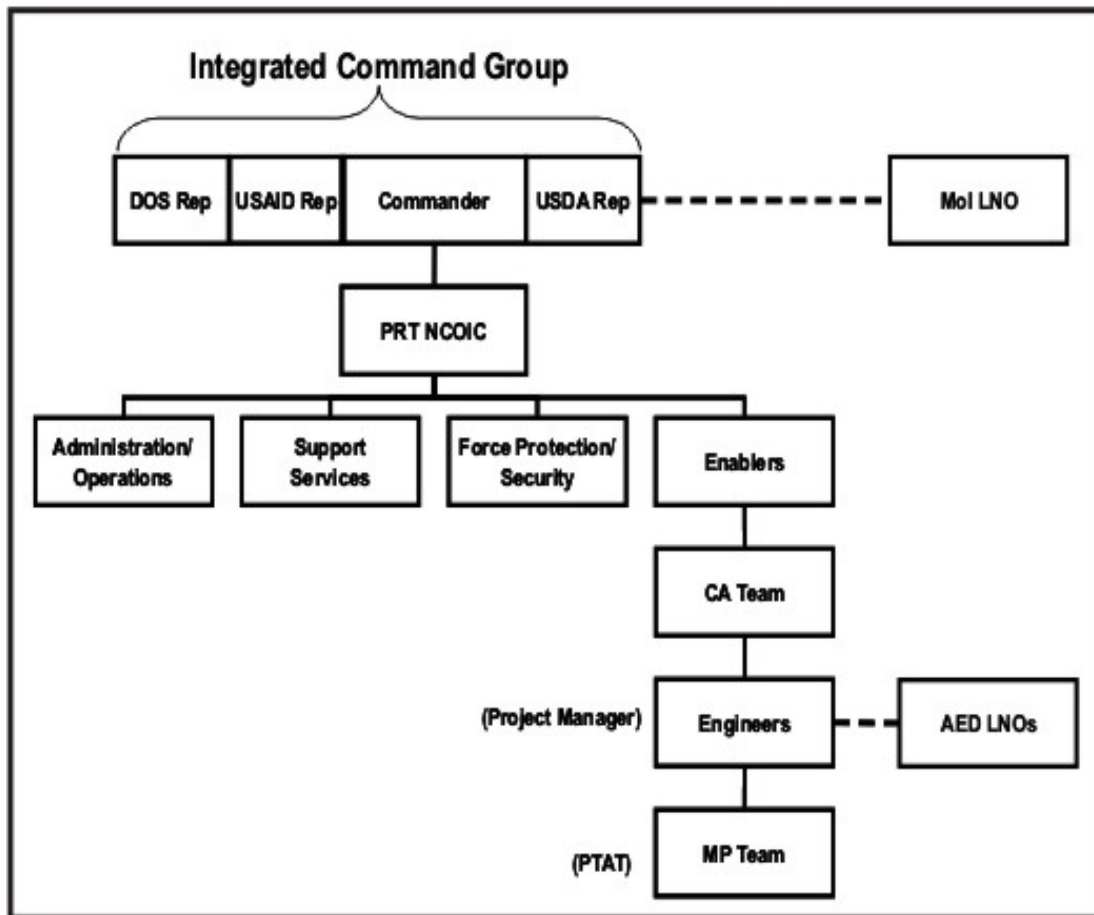
³⁷ Ibid., 6.

experience, which proves very difficult to capture once the personnel scatter to the four winds.

Typically, the PRTs are either combinations of Navy and Army personnel or Air Force and Army personnel. Rarely is a PRT comprised of significant numbers of members from the three services. The military commanders of the PRTs are either active duty Air Force Lieutenant Colonels or active duty Navy Commanders, who go through a nomination and command screening process by their parent service prior to taking command. The officers selected to command PRTs do not as a rule come with any civil affairs background and rely on good leadership, common sense, and a certain amount of what Clausewitz called *coup d'oeil* or clear understanding of the tactical situation. The service that commands the PRT also provides the majority of the combat service support. For example, PRTs with Navy Commanders will muster out with Navy cooks, mechanics, medical staff, and other support personnel.

The three civilians plus the military PRT Commander form an *Integrated Command Group* (Figure 3-1) in which, theoretically, all four members have an equal say in determining the course and direction of the PRT. In reality, given that the military provides the preponderance of manpower, resources, and mission enablers, the military PRT Commander is first among equals. Given this splintered leadership arrangement, *unity of effort* is the key to PRT success. Without *unity of effort* the PRT cannot realize the full potential of all the elements of national power. It is critical to understand the role that each member of *Integrated Command Group* plays in order to fully leverage all

elements of both hard and soft power available within the whole of government.



Source: Center for Army Lessons Learned, PRT Playbook 07-34, September 2007.

Figure 3-1 Integrated Command Group

The PRT Military Commander is responsible for managing all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the PRT including security, logistics, housing, transportation, also planning and executing tactical missions. The PRT Commander oversees critical enablers that allow the PRT to mass properly its effects, including Civil Affairs operations, Information Operations (IO), and intelligence fusion. Beyond the mundane routine military functions of command, the PRT Commander plays a huge role in the execution of all three lines of PRT operation--security, governance, and reconstruction.

The PRT Commander is a key figure in mentoring and advising prominent provincial and district level government officials, working closely with the U.S. Department of State representative to orchestrate PRT efforts along the governance line of operation. The PRT Commander helps synchronize Afghan security elements and clarify their roles and responsibilities, serving as the primary liaison between the U.S. military and the Afghan provincial government.³⁸ The PRT Commander plays a role working with the USAID representative and other development advisors on the economic development of the province and harmonizes the development effort with the provincial government to ensure both efforts compliment the goal of helping the central government. The PRT Commander is a jack of all trades, with the possible exception of security, and a master of none—relying heavily on the expertise of the other members of the Integrated Command Team to advance the PRT’s Lines of Operation.

The job description for the Department of State (DoS) Representatives within the U.S. PRT structure allows for great latitude in performing State Department mission. DoS representatives may be either a Foreign Service Officer (FSO) or a government civil servant (GS). State Department officers serve as the political advisor and mentor the Provincial Governor, the Provincial Council, the Ministerial Line Directors and the provincial judiciary officials. Besides advising the Afghans, the DoS representative works closely with the PRT commander and USAID representative to ensure unity of effort across all elements of the provincial government. The DoS representative serves as a resource for the PRT on matters related to Afghan culture, the Afghan political system, and provincial politics. He/she also functions as the eyes and ears for the U.S. Embassy

³⁸ Robert M Perito, “The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified,” *United States Institute for Peace Special Report* (Oct 2005), <http://www.isip.org/pubs/special-reports/sr152.html>, (accessed 28 February 09.), 6.

in their respective provinces. Arguably, one of the most important functions the State Department representative undertakes is the daily interaction with the local Afghans. In that capacity, he/she can gauge the pulse of the population and provide a personal “gut feel” assessment of the conditions and effectiveness of the local Afghan government. The DoS representative determines the course the governance line of operation takes and provides an expert assessment of governance effectiveness by establishing and maintaining good working relationships with key government, military, tribal, village, and religious leaders in the provinces.³⁹ Given the political nature of insurgencies, the PRT DoS rep serves as the main battery in the PRT arsenal with a huge array of critical tasks for one person.

USAID representatives are present at all levels of the U.S. PRT command structure, including Regional Commands, Joint Task Force, ISAF Headquarters, and the U.S. Embassy. The USAID Field Service Officer (FSO) advises the PRT commander, provincial governor, and other Afghan authorities on economic development and reconstruction matters. He/she also reports to the U.S. Embassy on conditions in the field and the development capacity of local governments. He/she is a key member of the PRT's Project Review Committee, which considers project proposals to ensure suitability and sustainability. The USAID FSO works closely with the PRT Commander to identify and incorporate USAID centrally-managed nationwide projects that may be available to help aid in the PRT's mission.⁴⁰ The USAID FSO works closely with the PRT Civil Affairs Teams assessing the needs of the province. Given the reluctance of Non-governmental

³⁹ Interview with Ms Karen Chandler, former U.S. Department of State Representative, PRT Sharana and PRT Farah, Afghanistan May 2007 – May 2008. 15 December 2008.

⁴⁰ Perito, 5.

organizations (NGO) to jeopardize their neutrality, the USAID FSO provides a critical bridge between the PRT and the NGOs.

Borrowing from an old Oldsmobile commercial, this is not your father's USAID. Visions of the USAID worker out living among the villagers with his or her sleeves rolled up looking like a well dressed Peace Corps volunteer digging a well or irrigation project is no longer the case. The USAID workforce has declined significantly from the CORDS days in Vietnam, where the worldwide USAID workforce numbered 4,300 personnel. In 2007, the USAID workforce approached 2,200.⁴¹ Typically very young and motivated, the PRT FSO lacks the depth of experience expected of a career USAID FSO civil servant. Due to limited USAID manpower worldwide, the typical PRT FSO is a contract hire on a single year contract, making the Field Support Officer more of a facilitator than an implementer. The USAID FSO determines what projects support the appropriate development strategy and using USAID financial resources contracts with implementing partners to execute the actual construction of a particular project or program. This devolution from the classic Vietnam era USAID Field Support Officer to a contract facilitator has resulted in the loss of invaluable personal interaction with the local population.

With an economy that is over 85% agrarian, arguably the most valued mentor of the PRT is the Agriculture Representative. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides PRT advisors in six-month or twelve-month rotations whose task is to foster reconstruction of the agricultural sector and to enhance the central government's ability to provide services to the rural population. USDA selects volunteer representatives from

⁴¹ Stimson Center/American Academy of Diplomacy study, "A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future" (October 2008), http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/FAB_report_2008.pdf, (accessed 3 March 2009)

those responding to a general appeal across all Department of Agriculture constituent agencies. USDA provides a wide variety of experts based upon the skill sets of available volunteers. Examples of USDA personnel who have served in PRTs are veterinarians, soil specialists, food safety experts, forest conservationists, plant pathologists, and agriculture extension specialists.⁴²

Not all members of the PRT are American. A closely associated member to the Integrated Command Team is the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) Liaison Officer (LNO) who provides advice on local political dynamics and proves invaluable in providing reach-back to the various Afghan government ministries in Kabul.⁴³ If fully integrated into the PRT command structure, the Liaison Officer is an invaluable asset to the PRT mission. Lacking tactical patience, the PRTs tend to marginalize the Liaison Officers due to language and cultural barriers. As the PRTs build capacity in the provinces, the human capacity built through the Liaison Officer may have a greater and more lasting impact than any school or clinic built.

The members of the command team are like the individual fingers of a hand, each limited in their own power and strength. Unity of effort brings the fingers together to form a fist to synchronize the elements of national power and deliver a powerful punch. Conversely, unsynchronized and non-integrated efforts by the key players within the PRT only serve to confuse and blur the PRT lines of operation.

⁴² Perito, 6.

⁴³ Ibid.

IV. PRT Lines of Operation

There can be no lasting security without development and no development without security. Success requires a comprehensive approach across security, governance and development efforts and between all local and international partners in support of the Afghan Government.

--NATO Bucharest Summit 3 April 2008

The PRTs mission involves three primary lines of operation; (1) Security (2) Governance and (3) Economic development. Security is the least essential, but paradoxically, the most urgent element. By ignoring or neglecting security, as was done in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand for a number of years, ISAF and the Coalition allowed anti-governance elements a chance to take control of large regions of the country. Of the three lines of operation, governance is the most essential in separating the insurgent fish from the sea (population). Without good governance and with economic development, the average Afghan will see no benefit to cooperating with the provincial or central authorities. They will not risk themselves for an alternative that offers nothing better. Economic development is a key part of the equation and serves to buttress the promotion of good governance. As General David D. McKiernan, commander of NATO's International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan observed, "The security line of operation cannot work without governance and without development. They all have to work together for comprehensive effects to defeat this insurgency and bring a better future for Afghanistan."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) News Transcript. Gen David McKiernan, DoD News Briefing from the Pentagon, 1 October 2008. <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4297>, (accessed 15 January 2009).

Security Sector Reform

Seven years after the U.S. and its' Coalition partners ousted the Taliban regime the security threat level in approximately 40% of the districts in Afghanistan is still assessed to be *High* or *Severe*.⁴⁵ Without lasting security, every step forward in governance or development eventually results in two steps backward. According to the Army COIN manual the "goals during an initial stage of a counter-insurgency are to protect the population, break the insurgents' initiative and momentum, and set the conditions for further engagement."⁴⁶ Arguably the most important of these goals is the protection of the population, for without their assured protection nothing else the government does matters. After suffering 30 years of war and atrocities, the Afghan people throughout the countryside are Hobbesian in their views on governance. In his book, *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes contends that the pursuit of self-preservation dominates human behavior. The Afghan people are very tolerant, overlooking corruption and incompetence of their local government as long as the government can their guarantee safety and security. In Bakwa District of Farah Province, six boy's schools have been built over the last seven years. As recently as spring of 2008, four of the six schools stood empty due to a lack of security and direct influences of the Taliban and narco-traffickers on the local populace, illustrating the indivisible relationship between security and governance.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ CSTC-A Mission Update Briefing, 2 Oct 2008

⁴⁶ United States Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Counter Insurgency Field Manual. U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2007), 153.

⁴⁷ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008

Resettlement of large portions of the population, similar to what the British undertook during the Malayan insurrection, is not viable in Afghanistan due to the people's ties to traditional tribal lands. Virulent tribalism and ethnic diversity further reinforces and makes impossible any consideration of forced migration or resettlement. Results would be comparable to the disastrous U.S. resettlement of the Vietnamese peasantry during the Vietnam War.⁴⁸ The military axiom that states, "He, who tries to defend everything, defends nothing" may not prove appropriate when referring to the situation in Afghanistan. Options for protecting the population are few—defending everything maybe the only option in Afghanistan. The short-term solution is to leave the population in place and rely heavily on U.S. and ISAF forces, shifting over time to an ever-greater reliance on a growing Afghan National Security Force.

Consistent with traditional counter-insurgency theory, the U.S. and Coalition strategy for securing the population relies largely on developing and partnering with capable Afghan Security National Forces (ANSF), in particular the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan National Army (ANA). Unfortunately, systemic problems with corruption, tribal loyalties, and lack of civic responsibility continue to plague the ANP, who still prey upon the citizens by conducting illegal checkpoints, stealing from the public, or abusing rival tribal members.⁴⁹ The Army COIN Manual emphasizes the benefits of using *host nation* forces to demonstrate the government's ability to provide for the needs of the people. Additionally, the concept of using *host nation* forces, especially locally generated police or para-military forces, is that they live in the

⁴⁸ Paul Melshen, "Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign plan: Critical Considerations in Counterinsurgency Campaigning," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No.4, (December 2007): 667.

⁴⁹ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

community among the people, have a sense of ownership, and can be exceptionally good sources of intelligence.⁵⁰ Recruiting from the population also provides a means of support to a significant number of young men, who absent an opportunity to make a living would be potential recruits for the insurgents. Although security sector reform is one of the three primary lines of operation for the PRTs, the development and mentoring of the ANSF is largely being conducted by the 4000 servicemen and women of the U.S. Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A).⁵¹ As a direct result of CSTC-A's herculean effort the Afghan National Army is predicted to reach the Afghan Compact goal of 70,000 troops by spring of 2009 with an expectation to further increase to total end strength of 80,000 in 2010.⁵²

The current U.S. PRT Model provides very little in the way of hands-on ANSF mentoring and development. Each of the U.S. PRTs has a small contingent of military police often referred to as the Police Training and Assist Team (PTAT). The average U.S. PRT PTAT contains no more than three Airmen or Sailors. CSTC-A's predominate role in police training and mentoring has dwarfed the PTAT effort to the point of the PTAT no longer being cost effective in terms of limited critical enablers, such as force protection and transportation. The U.S. PRTs would be better served if the PTAT billets

⁵⁰ United States Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Counter Insurgency Field Manual. U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2007), 200-203.

⁵¹ CSTC-A provides advisors, mentors and trainers to help both the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior organize, train, equip, employ, and support the ANSF in order to defeat the insurgency, provide internal security, extend and enforce rule of law, set conditions for economic development, and gain the trust and confidence of the citizens of Afghanistan.

⁵² CJ Radin, "Afghan National Army Update", *The Long War Journal* (February 2009) http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/afghan_national_army_1.php (accessed 3 March 2009).

were reprogrammed to be filled with engineers or other civil affairs type specialties to better support the governance or economic development lines of operation.

In line with CSTC-A's direct mentoring of the ANSF, U.S. PRTs can best support the Security Sector Reform line of operation by being the synchronizing agent to ensure *unity of effort* of security elements within their respective provinces. The PRTs unique relationship with the Provincial Government is invaluable in gaining local Afghan support for the initiatives that each of the U.S. or Coalition training and mentoring entities hope to employ. Recognizing a lack of unity of command exists among the provincial Afghan National Security Forces, with the ANA reporting to the Ministry of Defense and the ANP reporting to the Ministry of Interior and neither actually reporting to the Governor's Office, the PRT can play a critical role in helping to establish at least some degree of *unity of effort*. Most U.S. PRTs attempt to foster *unity of effort* through participation in regular Provincial Security Council meetings among U.S., Coalition, and key Afghan security and intelligence leaders throughout the province.⁵³ In some provinces, the PRT Commander actually co-chairs the Provincial Security Council meetings with the Governor. When this coordination fails or *unity of effort* does not occur, disaster strikes.

Lacking synchronization and unity of effort, security operations often fail as was the case in Farah Province in early December 2007. ISAF's Regional Command West (RC-West) attempted to combine regional ISAF forces from Herat with provincial ANA and ANP forces to conduct a relatively short-notice clearing operation in Bakwa District,

⁵³ Interview with Col Kevin McGlaughlin, USAF, former PRT Qalat Commander 26 March 2009. Interview with Ms Karen Chandler, former U.S. Department of State Rep PRT Sharana 21 January 2009. Interview with LtCol Jeffery Fischer, USAF former PRT Qalat Commander 3 March 2009. The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008

Farah Province, which had fallen under Taliban control. Unfortunately, neither the PRT nor the Governor's Office were brought in on the *clearing phase* of the plan to ensure the ANA and ANP at the provincial level had received and understood their tasking from their respective regional headquarters. The ANA had received and understood their role, however, General Sarjang the ANP Provincial Chief of Police did not. As a result, once clearing operations near the Bakwa District Center were complete, the ANP and their CSTC-A mentors were not present to assist with initiating the *hold phase* of the operation in order to consolidate gains. With no holding force the ANA and ISAF forces withdrew, but not before an IED killed several ANA soldiers. Subsequent to the withdrawal, the RC West Commander requested the PRTs assistance in synchronizing the reentry operation to ensure the provincial ANA and ANP forces clearly understood their roles. With ISAF, the ANA, and the ANP all working in unity, the Bakwa District Center was cleared and the Afghan government was able to extend its authority into a previously Taliban controlled area. The lesson here is that the PRT can play a key role in security operations by aiding in synchronizing the efforts of ISAF and Afghan forces to achieve a modest *unity of effort* and ensure the a soldier's ultimate sacrifice is not made in vain.⁵⁴

The U.S. PRT Model was developed in 2003 prior to large-scale involvement by CSTC-A with the expectation that the PRT would shoulder much of the ANSF training burden. The PRT should recalibrate and focus at the operational level of the Security Sector Reform line of operation leaving the training to the better trained and resourced CSTC-A. The PRT will advance their mission further by being a synchronizing agent to

⁵⁴ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

ensure unity is effort among the local Afghan government, the ANSF, U.S. and Coalition Forces.

Governance

The primary objective of any counter-insurgency operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government.

--U.S. Army and USMC, Counter-insurgency Manual

Advancing governance is arguably the PRT's most important and most difficult task. The PRT's mission to, "assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to extend its authority into the provinces" is extremely challenging because the Afghan central government has never truly exercised control beyond the walls of Kabul. Outside the capital, the people of Afghanistan have never accepted a strong central government, but instead have relied on warlords and tribal forms of government to provide for their critical needs. Two key elements are necessary to introduce sub-national governance into Afghanistan. First, the central government must function and be seen as legitimate. Second, the people must accept the concept of civil society and place their faith and reliance in the government to meet their critical needs.

One of the greatest challenges faced by the PRTs is to develop a perceived legitimate government in an environment lacking human or intellectual capital and in a society where the populace views public service as a means of personal gain. Given this operating environment, the PRTs work to build provincial and district government capacity by helping officials develop basic management skills and mentor officials in the delivery of basic critical public services such as, but not limited to, security, food, water, healthcare, education, and communications.

A number of factors have contributed to the slow progress in introducing good governance into the provinces. The arcane political system established at the national level is not conducive to expanding power and legitimacy into the rural provinces. Contrary to many western democratic models of sub-national governance, provincial governors in Afghanistan obtain their offices through Presidential appointment and not through an election process. The governor's legitimacy is solely based on their appointment by President Karzai. In some cases, as in Herat Province, the gubernatorial appointment replaced the highly respected benevolent warlord Ishmael Khan with a governor whose only perceived legitimacy came from being a crony of President Karzai. Overcoming these challenges in legitimacy is essential if the GIRoA and the PRTs hope to separate the insurgent fish from the sea of the population.

Additionally, Rule of Law, the acceptance of citizens within a society to be governed by the law of land, is a relatively new concept in a country where armed might makes right. Through bribery and intimidation, many Afghans with money and power manipulate the legal system and local government officials to meet their own selfish needs. Sir Robert Thompson's second principle of counter-insurgency states, "The government must function in accordance with the law...A government which does not act in accordance with the law forfeits the right to be called a government and cannot expect its people to obey the law."⁵⁵ If government officials and those with influence do not subjugate themselves to the law, then why should the people?

The only popularly elected political body within the provinces is the Provincial Council (PC), which has very little real power and is often marginalized by the provincial

⁵⁵ Sir Robert Thompson. *Defeating Communist Insurgency, The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*. (New York, NY: Frederick A Praeger, Publishers, 1966), 52.

governor and ministerial line directors. The provincial governor has no direct authority over the ministerial line directors in his province, including the provincial line directors of Education, Public Health, Rural Reconstruction and Development (RRD), and Tribal Affairs. Nor does the provincial governor have any direct control over the Afghan security forces within his province, to include the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Border Police, the National Directorate for Security (NDS), or the Afghan National Army. Each department answers to national ministries in Kabul, or in the case of the ANSF their respective regional commanders, creating a convoluted and extremely tenuous chain of command. The best the centrally appointed and largely powerless provincial governors can do is exercise positional authority and hope they can achieve *unity of effort* within their province.

In performing its mission to build and sustain governance capacity, the PRT coordinates all functions and projects through the provincial government. The PRTs are neither surrogate provincial governments nor puppet masters of the existing Afghan provincial leaders. Afghan provincial leadership makes all decisions with the PRTs providing advice and counsel only. Whether good or bad, the local Afghan government makes the final decisions, which at times can be frustrating to their PRT mentors. In the battle for legitimacy, the old adage, “You are known by the company you keep” proves true and is the cause of a potential loss of PRT credibility when working with corrupt or extremely incompetent government officials. The overwhelming lack of human capital calls for a great deal of tactical patience for all involved. To use a sports metaphor, the Afghan government, especially at the provincial level, has very little “bench depth” and one has to work with the players one has. It is not unusual for PRT members to find

themselves mentoring provincial line directors who may actually be illiterate and often extremely corrupt. It is a challenge for the PRT to develop transparency in its actions to ensure they do not become unwitting partners in crime and corruption. In order to ensure transparency and maintain quality, all parties--the Governor's Office, the ministerial line directors, the PRT, and the Provincial Council--should strive for a *unity of effort*. *Unity of effort* fosters self-policing, where each different element of government exercises vigilance over one another, reducing the opportunity for corruption. Winning the critical skirmishes over incompetence and corruption in the battle for legitimacy will set the conditions for a civil society to flourish outside of Kabul.

Without good governance, including the establishment of the Rule of Law, the people of Afghanistan will continue to lack faith and confidence in the Afghan government and return instead to their traditional tribal systems. In worst-case scenarios, due to perceived governmental abuses, incompetence, and corruption, the populace will turn away from the central government and look to the Taliban or other anti-government entities for governance, security, and basic economic well-being. Without popular confidence in the government, the "sea" in which the insurgents swim will remain largely warm and inviting.

Economic Development

While the PRT's third line of operation is economic development, the Governance and Reconstruction/Development domains are inseparable. The PRTs in many parts of Afghanistan are the only entities capable of providing economic development into high threat areas or building government or economic capacity in semi-permissive environments. The PRTs find themselves operating in the early stages of the *Hold*

through the *Build* phases within the classic *Clear-Hold-Build* phased sequencing of operations.

In addressing the myriad of problems in Afghanistan, one is reminded of the old adage that holds, “If you want a new idea, read an old book.” Fortunately, in looking for a potential way ahead we do not have to go back that far in our own counter-insurgency history. The initial use of the U.S. military leveraging development to assist a government to extend its authority into the countryside subsequent to major combat operations can be traced back to the U.S. involvement in the Philippines from 1899-1902 following the Spanish-American War. The U.S. involvement during the Philippine Insurrection applied a very small footprint of dispersed forces over 500 small garrisons throughout the country. Recognizing the importance the population played in a counter-insurgency, President McKinley ordered the Army to “defeat the insurgents in a humane manner.”⁵⁶ In order to separate the insurgent from the sea of the Filipino population, the Army undertook a strategy whereby they fought the insurgents concurrent with developing local governance and economic development. The Army built schools, hospitals, and roads while setting up governments in rural areas where they also introduced modern sanitation and communication systems. The personnel from these garrisons lived and worked in local communities, fought insurgents, built rapport with the populace, and implemented civil works projects throughout the countryside.⁵⁷ Much in the same way U.S. Army coupled security and economic development in the Philippines,

⁵⁶ Ivan Kilko, Money in the Bank, Lessons Learned from Past Counter-insurgency (COIN) Operations. RAND Counter-insurgency Study Paper 4. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), 12.

⁵⁷ Timothy K Deady, “Lessons from a Successful Counter-insurgency: The Philippines, 1899-1902,” *Parameters*, no. 35 (Spring 2005), 57.

the PRTs use the same concept to keep the sea of the population from supporting the predatory and parasitic fish of the insurgency.

PRTs use economic development and capacity building for three distinct shaping purposes: (1) to influence an area and its people away from anti-government elements; (2) to reward people for their continued support for the government and; (3) to enhance popular confidence and a sense of legitimacy for the government. The PRT's purpose for economic development can be best described by the British counter-insurgency expert Sir Robert Thompson, who wrote "the real purpose of aid in all contexts, including counter-insurgency [is] to help the local government get its organization right and its departments working efficiently."⁵⁸ In other words, the PRT executes the economic development line of operation in support of the political objective of extending the authority of the GIRoA into the provinces.

There are several different approaches to employing economic development in combating the insurgency in Afghanistan. One approach is a deliberate approach, where the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) reviews potential development projects that originate at the village, district, or provincial level. The PDC includes provincial ministerial line-directors, local community and district representatives, the PRT, UNAMA, NGOs, and the popularly elected members of the Provincial Council (PC). The PDC coordinates all development in the province and ranks projects in order of importance in order to guide reconstruction efforts. Reconstruction and development projects make up the Provincial Development Plan (PDP) that is to be consistent with the overall *Afghanistan National Development Strategy* goals. Ideally, the PDP should look

⁵⁸ Thompson, 161.

out five years and provide the central government with a comprehensive plan, providing the basis for future government budgets. This structure seeks to ensure local participation in the decisions surrounding provincial reconstruction and requires close supervision and mentoring by the PRT to ensure the PDP facilitates economic growth as opposed to being just a Christmas or (Ramadan) wish list, which has frequently been the case. Budgeting and funding for economic development projects listed in the PDP should come first from the central Afghan government funding sources and only after their ability to fund the projects is exhausted should funds from USAID or DoD be used.

American funding for activities within the PRT AOR come from several sources including: Economic Support Funds (ESF) (USAID); Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid (DoD); Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) (DoD); and International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) (DoS). While limited funding is available from other sources, U.S. PRTs primarily use the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funding, provided by the Department of Defense, for development and shaping of their battlespace.

CERP projects carried out by the PRT are quick impact projects introduced to create near-term effects and specifically help the provincial government demonstrate its ability to meet critical needs of the people. CERP projects are not normally large-scale infrastructure or industrial base rebuilding projects. PRTs use CERP to fund vertical construction projects such as schools, clinics, District Communication Centers, or to develop human capital by funding literacy programs, mid-wife training, or nursing training. Additionally, CERP projects are a means to support the governance line of operation by training the local government in skills necessary to run successful local

government offices (e.g., computer training, planning, and budgeting). In fiscal year 2007, the U.S. obligated \$109 million in CERP funds to support PRT and other U.S. military sponsored projects in Afghanistan. CERP is a powerful tool in the PRT toolkit to generate timely effects to advance all three PRT lines of operation.

Besides capacity building, PRTs use CERP to create effects within their area of operations. It is the intent of CERP projects to attract the people away from supporting the insurgents and to demonstrate the government's ability to provide for their needs. The PRT partners with the appropriate local government offices to coordinate the implementation of their respective projects; for example, partnering with the Line Director for Education when building a new school. Partnering is critical to ensure the synchronized application of aid. In this case ensuring that teachers, textbooks and operations and maintenance costs are included in the school construction plan. Absent this mentoring, there is a strong possibility of schools being built without any plan for actually operating them.

CERP is very effective at providing start up costs, but is not a tool for sustaining projects. Therefore partnering with government officials is essential to ensure the provincial budgets account for the long-term maintenance and operation costs of CERP projects. PRTs also partner with the village elders in the vicinity in which the projects will be located in order to ensure security and support for the project. Without the buy-in of the village elders and the people there is a significant risk that insurgents will target the project. If the PRTs can get buy-in from the people, they will defend the project, support its mission, and potentially strengthen their ties to the government. However, without

local support the projects become targets of the Taliban and monuments to government impotence while enhancing the insurgent's prestige in the community.

A critical weakness in the economic development line of operation is that the military is the only entity in the PRT that has quick responsive funding. USAID, DoS, and USDA do not have CERP-like funding mechanisms that allow them to deliver assistance directly, flexibly and quickly. DoS and USDA rely largely on USAID and DoD for development support. In Fiscal Year 07-08, USAID provided 6% of its \$2.6 billion budget to Afghanistan in support of U.S. and ISAF PRTs.⁵⁹ USAID's financial resources, however, are managed centrally through a complex contract and assistance mechanism providing very little flexibility or quick response. According to Ms Michelle Parker in her testimony before the House Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, "this is due to political decisions in the 1980s to downsize and outsource most of its technical capacity to companies that now directly implement USAID's programs." Because of the downsizing, the classic hands-on mentoring of host nation fieldwork reminiscent of the Vietnam Era within USAID no longer exists, replaced by a rigid centrally managed approach utilizing contractors or NGOs as program implementing partners.⁶⁰ As a result, USAID's responsiveness in supporting the PRT is slow, distant, and occasionally late in meeting critical needs of their respective provinces.

The one key limitation or restraint with CERP is the prohibition on the PRTs to fund projects that directly support the Afghan National Security Forces due to money being appropriated elsewhere in the U.S. Government for CSTC-A's use for such

⁵⁹ USAID 2002-2008 Budget and Obligation Factsheet, <http://www.usaid.gov/press/factsheets/2008/fs080327.html>, (accessed: 3 February 2009).

⁶⁰ Statement of Michelle Parker before House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation on September 5, 2007, p. 10.

projects. Some confusion exists when dealing with the provincial Afghan officials who do not understand this restriction, exacerbated by the fact the PRTs and CSTC-A fall under different chains of command. When transitioning from the *Clear Phase* to the *Hold Phase* this restriction can cause significant concern, for example when police checkpoints or army garrisons need to be constructed quickly to consolidate gains. At the tactical level, CSTC-A Police Mentor Teams (PMT) or Embedded Training Teams (ETT) do not have the authority nor engineering design and contracting capability to implement engineering projects quickly, which must be coordinated and approved by CSTC-A regional headquarters. In contrast, the PRTs have all such capability locally to include relationships with local contractors and builders, but CERP restrictions on PRTs supporting ANSF construction preclude timely support. In two specific instances where the PRT was unable to build legally a garrison, the ANA occupied and fortified schools in the area. In each case, the Taliban exploited the closing and occupation of the schools as propaganda messages to undermine the efforts of the Afghan Government.⁶¹

Fortunately, the PRTs can legally renovate schools. In an effort to regain damaged legitimacy in the community, once the ANA unit moved out to permanent facilities the PRT used CERP resources to restore and renovate the schools to conditions vastly better than when they were originally occupied by the ANA. As good a tool as CERP is to the PRT, it has its limitations and restrictions.

Because all counter-insurgencies are political in nature, all actions should serve to meet the political objects and endstate envisioned—including all aspects of humanitarian assistance. PRTs are not humanitarian assistance (HA) organizations. Contrary to many

⁶¹ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

perceptions, the PRT does not exist to provide humanitarian relief and hand out food, medicine, and blankets to the people of Afghanistan. Coordinated through the Afghan government, humanitarian assistance ideally comes from the United Nations Assist Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the NGO and IGO community. All actions the PRTs execute should be in direct support of the PRT mission to extend the authority of the GIRoA into the provinces. In order to garner support and reinforce legitimacy, the local Afghan government should lead the way in coordinating and providing HA, especially with predictable recurring humanitarian disasters created by harsh winters and spring floods. The PRT's role in humanitarian disaster is to create Afghan capacity to generate *unity of effort* among the Afghan government, UNAMA, NGOs and other IGOs.

Economic development is a powerful tool in the counter-insurgency toolbox, but only if it can be tied to increasing the prestige and legitimacy of the Afghan government. The Taliban looks to exploit perceived ineptness of the Afghan government at every opportunity. Therefore, all PRT actions should appear Afghan led, with the Afghan government helping Afghans. Building confidence in Afghan institutions is critical in separating the fish from the sea and establishing a civil society where the people have faith and confidence in their own government.

V. Unity of Command

Where possible, formal relationships should be established and maintained for unity of command. For all elements of the U.S. government engaged in a particular COIN mission, formal command and control using established command relationships within a clear hierarchy should be axiomatic.

--*U.S. Army and USMC, Counter-insurgency Manual*

Counter-insurgency theorist Sir Robert Thompson maintained, “Ideally, a counter-insurgent would have unity of command over all elements of national power involved in counter-insurgency operations.”⁶² However, the best that military commanders can hope for under the current command and control structure in Afghanistan is *unity of effort* through communication and liaison with those responsible for military and nonmilitary elements of power. This lack of *unity of command* transcends all levels of command and creates external and internal stresses that run counter to the efficient execution of the PRT mission. When bringing together numerous governmental organizations into a PRT-like structure, all government organizations believe they should have an equal say without subordinating themselves under another department or agency. It is not surprising that a unified military command structure does not exist. The U.S. PRTs receive direction from ISAF, USFOR-A, the U.S. Commander Joint Task Force, USAID, and the U.S. Embassy. It is then up to the PRT *Integrated Command Group* to determine how best meet the various requirements and apportion very limited resources to achieve meaningful objectives within the PRT mission area.

There is a recognized lack of *unity of command*-- one of the fundamentally accepted principles of war--internal and external to the PRTs in Afghanistan. In General

⁶² Thompson, 51.

Barry McCaffery's (USA Ret) after action report from his visit to NATO SHAPE

Headquarters and Afghanistan in the summer of 2008 he writes:

There is no unity of command in Afghanistan. A sensible coordination of all political and military elements of the Afghan theater of operations does not exist. There is no single military headquarters tactically commanding all U.S. forces. There is no clear political governance relationship organizing the government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and its many Agencies, NATO and its political and military presence, the 26 Afghan deployed allied nations, the hundreds of NGO's, and private entities and contractors.⁶³

Perhaps optimistically, one can hope that the dual assignment of General McKiernan as Commander, International Security and Assistance Force (COMISAF) and Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan (COMUSFOR Afghanistan) in October of 2008 might reduce or mitigate the effects of the stove-piped command structure. However, at this time is too early to tell how effective the command structure will be.

The realization that *unity of command* does not exist within the PRTs resonates within the halls of Congress as evidenced by the Congressman Ike Skelton's summary of the 2009 Fiscal Year Defense Authorization Act, where he writes:

The PRTs operate under complicated and often unclear chains of command. The lack of "unity of command" has at times resulted in uncoordinated, and even counterproductive, outcomes. The Committee strongly recommends that DOD and the Department of State seek to unify leadership and command within PRTs to clarify accountability and authority and provide personnel in the field with a clear source of guidance and direction.⁶⁴

⁶³ General Barry McCaffery, USA (Ret), After Action Report, Visit to NATO SHAPE Headquarters and Afghanistan, 21-26 July 2008. <http://www.mccaffreyassociates.com/pages/documents/AAR-July%202008.pdf>, (accessed 7February 2009)

⁶⁴ Representative Ike Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee 110th United States Congress, HR 5658: FY2009 National Defense Authorization Act Summary. 16 May 2008.

Connecting with joint, interagency, Coalition, and indigenous Afghan organizations is important to ensure that objectives are shared and that actions and messages are synchronized. The resulting synergy is essential for effective counter-insurgency operations to occur. *Unity of command* or, at the very least an effective, *unity of effort*, must pervade every level of stabilization and reconstruction activity, from Washington to Kabul, from CJTF Headquarters in Bagram to the U.S. Embassy and from one side of the PRT Forward Operating Base to the other. Otherwise, well-intentioned, but uncoordinated actions can cancel each other out or result in mission failure. In the late fall of 2007, PRT Farah, given the mission to work with RC West maneuver forces along the Ring Road to enhance security, did not have CERP funding provided by CENTCOM through the American CJTF in Bagram available due to end of fiscal year constraints. Without funding, the PRT could not create the tangible effects required by the mission to mitigate the Taliban's influence within the villages along the Ring Road. Quick impact CERP projects executed during the operation such as digging wells or erecting culvert bridges could have created temporary operating space and gained the support of the locals in order to engage in more substantive economic development. Had operating space been created, projects such as roads, clinics, communication centers, or schools could have been undertaken. Unfortunately the opportunity to bring the government and the people together was lost due to unavailability of funding. In the end, the ISAF operation yielded very little in the way of improved security and caused the villagers to wonder why they should cast their lot with the Afghan government.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The author's personal experience serving as PRT Commander Farah Province, Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008

VI. Information Operations

The printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander....

--T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

This statement is even more true today than it was when Lawrence wrote it nearly a century ago—except that for commanders to be truly effective in Afghanistan today, they do not just need a printing press, but require radio, television, and the Internet. Sir Robert Thompson writes, “...the aim of information services is to rally the population to the side of the government and to encourage positive support for the government in its campaign.”⁶⁶ As the PRTs assist in extending the authority of the GIRoA into the provinces of Afghanistan, they must have effective methods of connecting the people with the provincial government. In a nation where rumor is the dominate source of news, the PRT’s mission must include actions to assist the provincial government inform, reassure, and persuade the population. While not a recognized PRT line of operation, *information operations* are critical in connecting the government to people. Without effective *information operations*, the Afghan people will not fully realize what the government is doing to improve security, governance, and economic development, keeping the sea of the population warm and inviting for the insurgents.

Letting the locals know what is going on outside of their village is much better than allowing the Taliban to facilitate rumors to terrorize or at least confuse the population on government intent. People yearn for reassurances that the government understands their plight and shall address their security and other concerns. This is the essence of hope. The GIRoA, with PRT assistance, must persuade the population that the

⁶⁶ Thompson p.90

government has the superior capability, will, and strategy to defeat the insurgents, but that the struggle will not be successful without the people's help. Throughout this communications effort, the PRTs and other *information operations* elements must rebut insurgent propaganda because the population will readily believe all kinds of accusations, no matter how absurd, if not addressed immediately.

Information and expectations are related. To be successful in waging the Information War in Afghanistan, the PRT and the provincial government must carefully manage both. After nearly 30 years of war and unfulfilled promises, the Afghan people are skeptical and require a good deal of convincing before they will surrender their loyalty and independence to the government. If unable to meet the people's hopes and expectations in timely fashion, the credibility and perceived legitimacy of the government will suffer. The PRTs throughout Afghanistan today are dealing with the hangover of false expectations generated by the U.S. and Coalition partners subsequent to the ouster of the Taliban. When post-Taliban euphoria swept across Afghanistan generating sky-high expectations, many Afghans imagined the vast wealth and power of the U.S. would be at their disposal and the quality of their lives would improve immediately. Seven years later, many of the Afghans have now lost their patience and have turned their backs on their government, becoming eager recruits for the Taliban, narco-traffickers and other anti-government entities. The current upswing in Taliban violence and the doubling of opium cultivation since 2003 may be indicators that popular hope and patience in the Afghan government is waning.⁶⁷ When asked to assess their overall living conditions, Afghans stated their satisfaction has declined over the last three years. In January 2009,

⁶⁷ Jill McGivering, "Afghan People Losing Confidence", *BBC News*, 9 February 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7872353.stm (accessed 5 March 2009).

62% of Afghans polled said their living conditions were somewhat good or very good (compared with 83% in 2005) - but 38% said they were somewhat bad or very bad (compared with 16% in 2005).⁶⁸

To limit discontent and build support for the GIRoA, America, its Coalition partners, and the Afghan government must create and manage realistic expectations among the populace. Failing to deliver on promises creates a jaded society where individuals ask for everything and expect nothing. Despite billions of aid and reconstruction provided by the U.S., ISAF and other donor nations, in a poll conducted by the Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research, 67% of Afghans felt they had not directly benefitted from any aid. This poll suggests that the *information operations* campaign is failing to express to the Afghans the direct and indirect benefits of development projects throughout the country. For example, a new connector road constructed in the northern city of Faizabad resulted in a 67% decrease in travel times, a 40% reduction in travel costs and improved security, resulting in reduced consumer costs and better market accessibility.⁶⁹ The positive impact of projects like this road are having throughout Afghanistan must be articulated in such a way that the average Afghan realizes the direct benefit to themselves. The PRTs and the local Afghan government need to improve and step up their *information operations* before patience and faith in the government is lost.

⁶⁸ Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research in Kabul, BBC, ABC News America and ARD of Germany Afghan Opinion Poll, 12 January 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7872353.stm (accessed 20 February 2009).

⁶⁹ USAID, Afghanistan, Frequently Asked Questions on Infrastructure Development, Updated 31 March 2009. <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Program.25f.aspx> (accessed 4 April 2009)

Managing expectations also involves demonstrating economic and political progress as part of the campaign to show the populace how life is improving. In the end, the people must be convinced that their lives will be better with the Afghan government in control than with the Taliban. Both the PRT and the provincial government must ensure that their deeds match their words. If the local government does not or cannot inform the population of actions or projects complete, then from an *information operations* perspective those actions never happened. To paraphrase Sir Issac Newton, any action has an information reaction; the PRT must carefully consider its effect on the many audiences involved and work with the provincial government to help shape responses that further desired ends

VII. Recommendations

Conceived in 2002, the U.S. PRT Model has not been revised nor adapted to meet the new challenges of the ever-changing battlefield environment in Afghanistan. As the military surge in Afghanistan commences, the PRTs must position themselves to consolidate potential gains created by the increased security and access. This chapter recommends several changes to the U.S. PRT Model to maximize the full potential of all elements of national power available to the PRTs in order to create lasting positive effects throughout Afghanistan.

Unity of Command.

Counter-insurgencies, which bend toward being solely military operations, have historically proven to be less effective and may ultimately fail, as the British learned early in Malaya and Kenya, the French learned early in Algeria, and the Israelis have yet to learn in Gaza and the West Bank. The PRTs have struggled under the external and internal pressures of a convoluted and sometimes disjointed chain of command. The PRTs have had to rely on the personalities and the professionalism of their key leaders to ensure *unity of effort*. This is not how to run an organization in combat. When egos and personalities clash there is little that anyone can do to preserve efficiency and maximize the full potential of the PRT. In many instances, because they are dwarfed by the overwhelming number of military personnel, the non-military members of the PRT feel marginalized, which in turn denies the PRT access to their expertise. Because U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan are military led, they have a natural tendency to examine counter-insurgency and nation building issues primarily from a military perspective. However,

counter-insurgency campaigns are also widely recognized to be as much about political and law enforcement issues as they are military operations.

An example of a successful joint civil-military stabilization operation is the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program implemented in Vietnam. Similar in its origins to the PRT, CORDS, as described by its founder, Robert Komer “was a field expedient tailored to particular need perceived at the time.”⁷⁰ CORDS pulled together various U.S. military and civilian agencies involved in the pacification effort, including the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Information Agency, and the CIA. Appointed U.S. military or civilian province senior advisors and CORDS civilian/military advisory teams operated throughout South Vietnam’s 44 provinces and 250 districts.⁷¹ Like PRTs, CORDS took the flexible, pragmatic approach to their counter-insurgency mission. As Komer stated, “CORDS in effect wrote the field manual as it went along.”⁷² CORDS was the only joint civil-military expeditionary organization in U.S. history to attain a true unity of command within the context of the inter-agency environment. So fully integrated were civilians in the CORDS program that certain civilians at the provincial and district levels had control over all military financial resources, equipment and personnel, to include writing military officer efficiency reports.⁷³ Similar in concept and

⁷⁰ Robert W Komer, *Bureaucracy at War U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict*.(Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc, 1986), 119.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ United States Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Counter Insurgency Field Manual. U.S.Army Field Manual No. 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 2007), 73-74.

philosophy, the PRTs still have not achieved the unity of command enjoyed by their CORDS predecessor. As we mine the past for solutions to current and future problems, a key lesson from the CORDS program is that in order to integrate fully a civil-military organization, shared financial resources and direct control of personnel are required.

Drawing on lessons from the U.S. CORDS program in Vietnam, other Coalition PRT Models, and the U.S. PRT Program in Iraq, this paper recommends the U.S. government adopt a single civilian PRT Commander/Leader construct. If one accepts Galula's theory that "a revolutionary war is 80% political" and recognizes that all the elements of national power have a role in successful counter-insurgency, then political objectives must retain primacy.⁷⁴ Planning and execution of all actions, kinetic or non-kinetic, should take into their account their contribution toward strengthening the Afghan government's legitimacy and achieving the U.S. Government's political goals. When soldiers properly understand the political nature of the counter-insurgency, they realize sometimes not shooting creates greater effects on the battlefield than shooting. The political and military aspects of an insurgency are usually so bound together as to be inseparable, and most insurgents recognize this fact. In counter-insurgencies, military as well as governance and economic development actions conducted without proper analysis of their political effects will at best be ineffective and at worst aid the enemy. Transition to civilian leadership will amend the character of the PRT away from the military and security and provide greater focus and fidelity along the governance and economic development lines of operation. With the pending military surge into Afghanistan, a key element of an exit strategy will be a legitimate and effective Afghan government at all

⁷⁴ Galula, 63.

levels. The PRT alignment should compliment the surge and capitalize on the security it will bring to develop the local Afghan government properly throughout the provinces.

Mr. Bruce Rogers, former U.S. Embassy PRT Director in Kabul, and others have stated that the Department of State does not have the personnel with the requisite leadership or personnel experience to lead the U.S. PRTs in Afghanistan today.⁷⁵ Mr. Rogers may be selling his fellow State Departments colleagues short, given their brilliant performance in Iraq. The slight restructuring of the existing U.S. PRT Model in Afghanistan will not leave a civilian leader alone and unafraid. The military, USAID, and USDA representatives will still conduct their traditional functions. The military deputy would still have responsibility for the critical enablers such as logistics, force protection, and transportation, but when the demands for limited resources and the priorities conflict, the civilian leader would provide the direction on the way ahead. Galula further states, “The inescapable conclusion is that the over-all responsibility should stay with the civilian power at every possible level.”⁷⁶ Too much military presence or overt influence with the GIRoA gives the population cause to wonder about the legitimacy of his or her own government.

Fund the Mission; Not the People.

In order to support the PRTs more effectively and to take full advantage of the invaluable human capital provided by the PRT interagency structure, recommend funding the PRT mission and not individual departments or agencies. In Iraq, a priority was to

⁷⁵ Interview with Mr. Bruce Rogers, former, Director, Provincial Reconstruction and Local Governance, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, 2007-2008, 23 December 2008.

⁷⁶ Galula, 63.

create flexible, responsive, and minimally-constrained civilian funding mechanisms to put a civilian face on the support and fill gaps not funded through existing economic and/or governance programs.⁷⁷ A decentralized PRT mission fund would provide flexible CERP-like resources or “civilian-CERP” that all members of the *Integrated Command Group* could apply. A single government agency or department would no longer dictate funding policies and priorities, leaving the *Integrated Command Group* to determine the best way to address their unique and sometimes immediate needs. Money is power. Shared funding facilitates parity among the inter-agency players leaving no one member of the *Integrated Command Group* marginalized.

Increase Birkenstocks in PRTs.

The challenge in developing an effective PRT structure is to achieve an optimized blending of civilian and military skill sets to accomplish the PRT mission safely and effectively. It is unrealistic to assume two or three civilians can train, mentor, and supervise the Governor, the Governor’s staff, district sub-governors, the Provincial Council, up to 26 ministerial provincial line directors, the provincial judges, and prosecutors effectively. Despite lacking the requisite expertise and training, the military has filled many of these mentoring roles, relying on quick thinking, personal experience, and a heavy dose of traditional “can-do” spirit to fill the gap. Hope, however, is not a method and GI ingenuity only goes so far. Despite good intentions, the efforts of these exceptional military personnel may prove counter-productive and result in poorly planned and executed governance and development efforts that only serve to exacerbate the existing problems plaguing the stabilization effort.

⁷⁷ U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan. Evolution of PRT Model in Afghanistan, Embassy Cable, Day Time Group 181125ZOCT08

As previously stated, civilians comprise only 4 percent of the PRT workforce as compared to the CORDS program which had over 17 percent civilians.⁷⁸ Recognizing some provinces in Afghanistan have over 5,000 civil servants, it is unrealistic to assume substantial gains in public administration and local governance are possible until more civilian expertise is available. The civilian surge should be similar to the one conducted concurrent with the military surge in Iraq, which saw a four-fold increase in U.S. Department of State personnel from early 2007 to July 2008.⁷⁹ As President Obama's call for a "dramatic increase in our civilian effort" evolves from an idea to execution, it should be understood that nothing related to Afghanistan is ever as easy as it first appears.⁸⁰

Drawing on lessons from Iraq and recognizing the existing civil administration challenges facing U.S. PRTs across Afghanistan, recommend increasing the DoS contingent in each PRT by an additional three personnel. With the additional civilian subject matter experts in public administration, budgeting, civil society and Rule of Law, PRTs can better support the GIRoA's efforts to create *unity of effort* among provincial and district government organizations. Understanding an increase in Birkenstocks on the ground will not fit all needs, this paper recommends implementation of a civilian flyaway team based out of the embassy in Kabul or a brigade headquarters to meet unique governance needs.

Without increased State Department expertise in governance and economic development *on the ground* in Afghanistan to round out and inform the military effort in

⁷⁸ Jeffery J. Clark, *Advice and Support: The Final Years 1965-1973* (Washington, DC: CMH, 1988). 373.

⁷⁹ GAO, 13.

⁸⁰ President Barack Obama, "A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan", Speech , 27 March 2009.

a synchronized manner, the huge amount of Defense Department resources, devoted to stabilization and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan will fail to create a peaceful, prosperous environment necessary to garner lasting popular support at all levels for the Afghan government. Shifts to increase personnel should span the interagency spectrum to achieve balance within the stabilization effort and provide a more holistic approach to making the “sea of people” uninhabitable for the insurgents.

Increase Dwell Time for Key PRT Members.

The deadly three-dimensional chess match the PRTs are currently engaged in Afghanistan would be better executed if tour lengths of key personnel extended to eighteen months. It is unrealistic to assume key members of the PRT fully understand the human terrain and dynamics of the Afghanistan operating environment enough to be fully effective in a short nine-month tour. The current tour length for military members of the PRTs is nine months; for the DoS and USAID reps it is twelve months; and the USDA rep tour length is either six or twelve. Exacerbated by a lack of operational guidance, unpredictable CERP budgets, and unity of command, short nine-month tours create a re-starting effect subsequent to each Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA). This re-start effect is not lost on the Afghans the PRTs mentor. As a result, the Afghans have a tendency to look only near term in an attempt to get as much out of the PRT as fast as they can. Such an approach is counter-productive to the long-term goals of developing a legitimate provincial government and developing Afghan capacity.

The current training and manning model for the PRTs does not support continuity. Even with differing tour lengths, the PRTs, to include the civilian element, are largely trained up as a team, deployed as a team, and returned home as a team. *A whole of*

government approach should consider a staggered approach, offsetting tour lengths of key members of the PRT by nine months such that there is always experience on the ground that can carry on long-term initiatives. Specifically, this paper recommends offsetting the military commander and DoS representative's tours by nine months to ensure continuity of the mentoring of key provincial government officials and adequate oversight of long-term programs.

Another specific recommendation is to offset tours by the PRT S-5, Future Plans Officer and the PRT S-3 Operations Officer by nine months. The concept would be that for nine months the S-5 would develop the PRT plans under the direction of the PRT Commander and DoS representative and for his/her subsequent nine months he/she would serve as the Operations Officer and actually execute the plans developed. This staggered approach to planning and execution would predictably enhance continuity.

Information Operations.

The manning of U.S. PRTs is not adequate to conduct effective *Information Operations* that weave all three lines of operation together to gain popular support for the Afghan government. The PRTs fill the Information Operations Officer billets from non-Information Operation specialties. The Navy sources the Information Operation Officer from the Cryptology professional community.⁸¹ The Air Force sources its manning requirement for PRT Information Officers from the Public Affairs professional community.⁸² Granted, while some elements of Navy Cryptology and Air Force Public Affairs are elements within Information Operations, the true element of Information

⁸¹ The author's personal experience serving as Commander PRT Farah Afghanistan. April 2007 to March 2008.

⁸² Interview 3 March 2009 with LtCol Jeffery Fischer, USAF, former Commander PRT Qalat Afghanistan.

Operations required from the PRTs is the psychological operations or PSYOPS element. Recommend the U.S. military source the Information Operations Officer billet on the PRTs from the U.S. Army Information Operations or Psychological Operations communities. Recognizing Information Operations have a profound impact on the success or failure of the PRT mission, it is imperative that the military apply the proper tool to the task.

VIII. Conclusion

While recognizing that all the elements of national power have a role in successful counter-insurgency campaigns, political objectives must retain primacy. In order to win the cultural war in Afghanistan and end popular support for the insurgency, the U.S. must first end the cultural struggle within our own government and truly resource and provide a more balanced *whole of government* solution in Afghanistan. *Unity of effort* can only go so far in properly massing the effects of all elements of national power. The U.S. must implement *unity of command* inside and outside of the PRTs with the U.S. State Department taking lead. This is not a time for half measures, as the situation in Afghanistan becomes more critical everyday. As the U.S. shifts manpower from Iraq to Afghanistan, so too should the State Department move to take command and put more boots (or Birkenstocks) on the ground in Afghan PRTs.

Given the extreme operating environment and the inability to isolate the insurgents, the U.S. and other NATO countries will see their long-term commitment challenged if the Afghan War lingers. A sense of urgency is called for along all three of the PRT's lines of operation, with a primary focus placed on the governance line of operation. Killing the insurgents only goes so far in fighting a "people's war." U.S. efforts in Afghanistan have focused on security sector reform to the virtual exclusion of the development of the local governmental institutions necessary to extend the authority of the GIRoA, while doing very little to develop or enable reconstruction of the Afghan economy. The PRTs, if properly aligned, are in a perfect position to reverse this trend. With the people as the objective, every action both kinetic and non-kinetic, must be understood as to how they are perceived by the population. The PRTs main effort must

include providing the Afghan people with an acceptable, legitimate, and competent government. Without good governance, the people of Afghanistan will never adopt the concept of a civil society and continue to rely on the traditional tribal social structure to account for their critical needs. Without popular confidence in the government, the “sea” in which the insurgents swim will remain largely warm and inviting.

After over seven years of U.S. presence in Afghanistan one has to wonder what has been gained by the billions of dollars invested and the ultimate sacrifice made by hundreds of U.S. and Coalition soldiers and the thousands of Afghans? Arguably, this paper has shown that chaos and instability has intensified in many parts of Afghanistan, and for those regions and Afghans still suffering under the tyranny of terror, a coherent counter-insurgency strategy that establishes and maintains a balanced, *whole of government* approach to PRTs may be Afghanistan’s only hope for a better future.

APPENDIX A. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

Currently, there are **26 PRTs** operating throughout the country as follows:

Regional Command North – RC(N)

- Kunduz (Germany), Kunduz province;
- Mazar-e-Sharif (Sweden), Balkh province;
- Feyzabad (Germany), Badakhshan province;
- Pol-e-Khomri (Hungary), Baghlan province;
- Meymaneh (Norway), Faryab province.

Regional Command West – RC(W)

- Herat (Italy), Herat province;
- Farah (United States), Farah province;
- Qala-e-Naw (Spain), Badghis province;
- Chaghcharan (Lithuania), Ghowr province.

Regional Command South – RC(S)

- Kandahar (Canada), Kandahar province;
- Lashkar-Gah (United Kingdom), Helmand province;
- Tarin Kowt (The Netherlands), Uruzgan province;
- Qalat (United States), Zabul province.

Regional Command East - RC(E)

- Bamyan (New Zealand), Bamyan province
- Bagram (US), Parwan province
- Nurestan (US), Nurestan province
- Panjshir (US), Panjshir province
- Gardez (US), Paktika province
- Ghazni (US), Ghazni province
- Khowst (US), Khowst province
- Sharan (US), Paktika province
- Jalalabad (US), Nangarhar province
- Asadabad (US), Kunar province
- Mihtarlam (US), Laghman province
- Wardak (TU), Wardak province
- Logar (Czech Republic), Logar province

There are no PRTs in Regional Command Capital.

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